

White House says most New Jersey drones were authorized by FAA: 'This was not the enemy'

Residents in New Jersey were concerned over the large amount of mysterious drones that flew above their homes, sparking conspiracy theories about the source.



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By Doha Madani

The mysterious drones that caused alarm among many New Jersey residents last year were in large part authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration, the White House said Tuesday.

The large number of unexplained nighttime drone sightings in New Jersey and other East Coast states created a panic which at one point shut down an airport.

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, now says many of those drones were authorized and known by the government.

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"After research and study, the drones that were flying over New Jersey in large numbers were authorized to be flown by the FAA for research and various other reasons," Leavitt said at a briefing Tuesday.

Leavitt said that the issue grew worse "due to curiosity," as some of the drones also belonged to hobbyists and private citizens.

"This was not the enemy," she told reporters.

A wave of panic caused by the drones drew misinformation online, with Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J., suggesting on Fox News that the drones belonged to Iran. The Department of Defense categorically denied the suggestion.

In December, New York Stewart International Airport was forced to close its runways for roughly an hour due to drone activity in the airspace. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul requested federal

assistance, saying the problem had "gone too far."

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy wrote to several federal politicians, including former President Joe Biden, urging them to take action at the national level.

Murphy wrote that he wanted to "encourage Congress to pass legislation empowering state and local law enforcement entities to use advanced detection and mitigation technologies to deal with UAS."

Drones are often referred to as unmanned aerial systems (UAS) or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

John Kirby, who worked in the Biden administration's Defense Department, pressed Congress to pass legislation to "deal with that growing ecosystem of drones in U.S. airspace." He told NBC's "TODAY" show last month that there was a gap in local, state and federal law on the matter.

"Our assessment leads us to conclude that these are lawful and legal aviation activities, manned and unmanned drones and civil aviation aircraft or commercial aircraft," Kirby said. "We know that there's no national security threat."

Doha Madani

Doha Madani is a senior breaking news reporter for NBC News. Pronouns: she/her.

Sent Date: 12/13/2024 11:07:11 AM

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CC: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) (PID) (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) (PID)
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Subject: FW: MCB Quantico Drone Sighting

FYSA – from (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) They have nothing at this time. (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) PID/JTTF United States Secret Service Desk: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Cell: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) JTTF: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) WARNING:

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Sent: Friday, December 13, 2024 11:04 AM To: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) (PID) Subject: Fw: MCB Quantico Drone Sighting You don't often get email from (b)(6); (b)(7)(C). Learn why this is important This is all we have. Nothing further came of it Respectfully, (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Assistant Special Agent in Charge Army CID – Executive Protection Directorate Protective Intelligence Branch Cell: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)

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(b)(7)(D) > Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: MCB

Quantico Drone Sighting Morning all, +FAA Intel watch, we're part of the same office, and one of our folks caught this last night while on shift. Providing narratives and summaries for MCB Quantico and Fort Meade last night. MCB Quantico: Narrative: (b)(7)(D) received a report from MCB Quantico CID of 16-18 large-sized drones flying an erratic pattern at approximately 1,000 feet, vicinity Onville Road Gate at MCB Quantico. They were noted as grey in color with flashing white and green lighting. (b)(7)(D) does not observe any primary targets within Turner Field (KNYG) Class D airspace at this time. (b)(7)(D)

Office has responded (b)(7)(D) will file the mandatory occurrence report (MOR) (b)(7)(E) notified. Media interest likely. WOC - WASHINGTON, DC UAS SIGHTING 12-12-2024 PRELIM INFO FROM FAA OPS: WASHINGTON, DC/UAS SIGHTING/1958E (b)(7)(D) ADVISED (b)(7)(E) REPORTED MULTIPLE UAS MANEUVERING AT LOW LEVEL VCNTY NYG. NO IMPACT TO AVIATION OPERATIONS REPORTED. NYG CID NOTIFIED AT (b)(7)(D) NOTIFIED AT (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)

(b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Published on: 12/12/2024 20:25:31 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada) By: EON ENS Alert. Sent By: (b)(7)(D) Narrative: (b)(7)(D) received a call from (b)(7)(D) involving a 911 report of (1) Quadcopter and (3) large UAS hovering directly overhead and vicinity 695 Mapes RD, FT Meade, MD (b)(7)(D) (b)(7)(D) Security responded and visually sighted the UAS at 0148. 0240 (b)(7)(D) relayed that FT Meade Base Security UAS sightings are active and remain present. (b)(7)(D)

(b)(7)(D) notified. DEN report broadcast. Media interest likely. 0315 (b)(7)(D) reports the last drone was seen at 0242, and it appeared to be dispersing. (b)(7)(D) are currently probing the base for any signs of unauthorized drone activity. 0353 (b)(7)(D) Meade, after touring the base, reports there is no current drone activity observed at Ft Meade.

Summary: WOC - FORT MEADE, MD UAS SIGHTING 12-12-2024 PRELIM INFO FROM FAA OPS: FORT MEADE, MD/UAS SIGHTING/2130E (b)(7)(D) ADVISED 4 UAS REPORTED OPERATING LOW LEVEL NEAR 695 NAPES RD VCNTY FORT MEADE. NO ACFT REPORTED SEEING UAS. (b)(7)(D) NOTIFIED AT (b)(7)(D)

(b)(7)(D) JG/MO Published on: 12/12/2024 21:48:01 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada) By: EON ENS Alert. Sent By: (b)(7)(D)
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Email:	(b)(6); (b)(7)(C)	HSDN/SIPR:	(b)(6); (b)(7)(C) JWICS:
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(b)(6); (b)(7)(C)	Subject: MCB Quantico Drone Sighting CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Good morning sir, Following up on the information you have on reported drone sightings in Quantico area. Thank you so much for your assistance. Very Respectfully.		
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CC:
Subject: Drone update

Quick update, The apparent number of drones spotted, 24, was an arbitrary number, just to illustrate the number of drone incidents over the last year. Pretty much a made up number.